

easy thing for some, but when it comes to this, it is not easy for me. It is something I will not do. I want to stand by it.

Let me say a word about the rest of the bill. There are provisions in this bill that deal with things we do not think about. Here is the reality: If you happen to be a grower, growing fruits and vegetables in America, and you put out a sign "Help Wanted"—would you like to come and pick strawberries in Salinas Valley in California; would you like to come pick apples in southern Illinois—there are not a lot of local kids who sign up. It is hard work, some say dangerous work, and I believe it is. Those who do these jobs—the migrants who come in and work—do it for a living. It is hard, tough labor. Without them, these crops do not get picked and processed and we suffer as a nation.

This bill has a provision on agricultural workers that is extraordinary. MICHAEL BENNET of Colorado and DIANNE FEINSTEIN of California are two who sat down with MARCO RUBIO of Florida, and others, and they worked out an agreement that has been signed on to by the growers and the unions representing the workers. How about that. A business, management, and labor agreement when it comes to ag workers. That is in this bill too. Should we walk away from that?

There is a provision as well to try to tap into the talent that is educated in America that can help us create jobs.

Let me say that one of the things I insisted on in this bill is that before anyone is brought in to fill a job from overseas, you first offer the job to an American. That, to me, is the bottom line. That is my responsibility as a Senator who represents many of the people who are unemployed today. But this bill takes a step beyond that. If you cannot fill that position, you have an opportunity to fill it with someone brought in from overseas.

I will give an illustration. The Illinois Institute of Technology—which is an extraordinary school for engineering and science in the city of Chicago—at their commencement a few years ago when I spoke, virtually every advanced degree was awarded to someone from India. Today, virtually every advanced degree is awarded to someone from China.

I have met some of these graduates, and I have said to them: With this education—the best in the world—would you stay in America if you were offered that chance? They said yes. Why would we educate them and send them off to compete with American companies? If they can be brought into our companies and create American jobs and opportunities with them, it is good for all of us. That is part of this bill as well.

As I look at this bill, this is a historic opportunity to solve a problem which has not been addressed seriously in 25 years, a problem which we know confounds us as we deal with 11 million undocumented people within our bor-

ders and one which truly reflects on our values as a nation.

I gave a speech last week to a group in Chicago, and I talked about the diversity of this group, the group that was gathered—Black, White, and Brown, young and old, men and women—and I said: If I asked everybody in this ballroom to write their family story, their personal story, each would be different. But there would be two chapters in that story that would be the same. The first chapter you might entitle "Out of Africa" because that is where we all started. It was 70,000 years ago when the very first immigrants left Ethiopia, crossed the Red Sea into the Arabian Peninsula, and literally populated the world. How do we know that? Because we can find chromosomal DNA that dates back to those original immigrants in every person on Earth. We all started in the same place 70,000 years ago, emigrating out of Africa.

The second chapter would be entitled "Coming to America." Every single one of us has a different story. My chairman is proud of his Irish and Italian heritage. His wife is proud of her French-Canadian heritage. I stand here proud of the fact that my mother was an immigrant to this country from Lithuania, brought here at the age of 2. Now it is my honor to stand on the floor of the Senate and represent 12 or 13 million people in the great State of Illinois.

As I have said before, that is my story, that is my family's story, that is America's story.

We have to get this right because immigration is not just a challenge, it is part of the American heritage. It is who we are. The courage of Senator LEAHY's family, the courage of my grandparents, to pick up and move and come to a place where many of them did not even speak the same language is part of our American DNA. That is what makes us different, and that is what makes us better, I guess I might say with some pride in where I came from.

We have to honor that tradition with this immigration reform bill, and I believe we do. To walk away from it at this point in time, to find some fault or some section that you disagree with is just not good enough. We have to accept our responsibility.

Yesterday 67—maybe 69—Senators were ready to do that. By the end of the week, stay tuned. We have a chance to pass this bill and make America a stronger nation, be fair and just to people who are here, and honor that great tradition of immigration.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

DREAM ACT CHAMPION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, one, I wish to applaud the senior Senator from Illinois for his statement, and I will say publicly on the floor of the

Senate what I have said to him privately, what I have said to him in our leadership meetings, and what I have said to him in our caucuses, that he is the champion of the DREAM Act. That act—when it finally passes, will give these DREAMers a better life, and there will be one person they can thank most and that will be Senator DICK DURBIN of Illinois. Because for the time I have known him—and it has been years—this has been first and foremost over and over again, and I just want to state my admiration for the Senator from Illinois for doing that.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

BORDER SECURITY, ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY, AND IMMIGRATION MODERNIZATION ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 744, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 744) to provide for comprehensive immigration reform and for other purposes.

Pending:

Leahy modified amendment No. 1183, to strengthen border security and enforcement.

Boxer-Landrieu amendment No. 1240, to require training for National Guard and Coast Guard officers and agents in training programs on border protection, immigration law enforcement, and how to address vulnerable populations, such as children and victims of crime.

Cruz amendment No. 1320, to replace title I of the bill with specific border security requirements, which shall be met before the Secretary of Homeland Security may process applications for registered immigrant status or blue card status and to avoid Department of Homeland Security budget reductions.

Leahy (for Reed) amendment No. 1224, to clarify the physical present requirements for merit-based immigrant visa applicants.

Reid amendment No. 1551 (to modified amendment No. 1183), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 1552 (to the language proposed to be stricken by the reported committee substitute amendment to the bill), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 1553 (to amendment No. 1552), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, yesterday the Senate voted to adopt an amendment offered by Senators CORKER and HOEVEN relating to border security.

I have some misgivings about the policy contained in that amendment, and I have spoken to that on the floor. But, at the same time, I commend these Senators for engaging on this legislation and taking the steps they feel are necessary to gain broader support for the underlying bill. We are now one step—one big step—closer to a